

FACTSHEET

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

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U.S. Department of Agriculture Visitor Center and Outreach Program at Riverside

The volume of agricultural trade and the complexity of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues surrounding trade are increasing every year. To address the growing need for a strengthened network with international counterpart organizations to better exchange animal and plant health information with regard to trade, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has established the USDA Visitor Center and Outreach Program.

The fundamental role of the Center is to support USDA's efforts to work with trading partners to develop and establish internationally accepted standards for the safe and fair movement of plant and animal commodities. The harmonization of import and export regulations and of disease- and pest-surveillance methodologies is essential to minimize risks in international trade. APHIS believes that by encouraging and enhancing the animal and plant health infrastructure development of our trading partners through training, orientation, and education, the agency can promote fair trade worldwide and protect American agriculture.

The Visitor Program The Center

The USDA Visitor Center at Riverside is located in APHIS' headquarters building in Riverdale, MD, and is a branch of the USDA Visitor Center in Washington, DC. The Riverside Center is open during normal business hours and is the central area for receiving domestic and international visitors at the Riverdale complex. The Center serves as a contact

point, meeting place, learning center, and service center. The staff provides assistance with information exchange, training programs, meetings and conferences, and learning experiences.

The Training Laboratory

The Center's training lab is located in the APHIS library and has information on SPS topics, USDA and APHIS organizational structures, APHIS position papers, briefings, and learning modules on SPS-related subjects. Self-paced learning modules provide basic SPS concepts on international standards and organizations and how the United States interprets those standards for its own SPS system. Visitors are invited to use the lab's resources on their own to research areas in which they are interested and ask additional questions if needed.

The Outreach Program

The outreach program provides APHIS and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) field employees with resources to address SPS issues and share information. These resources are shared with incountry counterparts and other collaborators as necessary. Learning modules on specific SPS issues exist in a variety of forms, such as active or static video, text, and Web- or computer-based modules, for delivery to diverse audiences.

USDA International Contacts

APHIS' foreign attachés or FAS' counselors/attachés are generally aware of all officials traveling from their respective countries to USDA headquarters regarding SPS issues. These attachés or counselors should be the primary point of contact for all international visitors to USDA headquarters and should inform APHIS and other appropriate USDA officials of impending visits. That way, a program of activities can be tailored to meet the international visitors' specific objectives.

Training Requests

In an effort to strengthen cooperation with U.S. trading partners, APHIS provides as well as hosts

various training, orientation, and education to international visitors. The following list includes some examples of requests received.

- **Orientation trips for international government officials.** The purpose and format for these visits can vary greatly. Visits can be arranged to APHIS offices (both at headquarters and in the field), other USDA agencies, the Department of State, colleges and universities, private industry facilities, laboratories, production areas, and farms.
- **Consultant services.** The purpose of these requests is primarily to educate, train, or jointly conduct research and training. Consultant service requests usually take place in another country, with the consultant assisting in survey design, evaluations of another country's quarantine system, processes, facilities, or equipment.
- **Informational materials.** These requests are primarily for information or materials to conduct training. The course materials are available in English. There are no restrictions on translation or distribution of these materials.
- **Education.** This request is more formal and takes place at a specific institution established to conduct training, such as a college or university.
- **Performance-based training.** Visitors can attend certain training developmental work or specific courses that are conducted at APHIS' Professional Development Center in Frederick, MD. Courses include plant health system analysis and other topics in the SPS arena.

Language

International visitors wishing to participate in the Visitor Center and Outreach Program's activities should be proficient in English. If an interpreting service is required, arrangements must be made through the visitors' embassy prior to the visit.

Inquiries

For information about the USDA Visitor Center and Outreach Program at Riverside contact
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